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ERRORS, CORRECTIONS, AND REVISION
OF THE NORTHEAST PLAN SERVICE

ACE-66

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Four and one-half years ago it was my pleasure to serve with Mr. Ashby and Mr. Lyle in assisting Representatives of the Agricultural Colleges of the Northeastern States select working drawings of farm buildings for use in their regional plan exchange service. This was a venture by the Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering and the Extension Service of the Department to establish a medium for cooperating with the Extension Services of the Northeastern Colleges in setting up more uniform practices in the construction of farm buildings, in reducing duplication of effort, and in supplying technical assistance to states not having plan services.

The plans selected at the conference in New York, March 1936, were drawn on standard size sheets and most of the institutions are using these in their plan services. In addition to the working drawings, miniature reproductions were published in your plan book -- Miscellaneous Publication No. 278, "Plans of Farm Buildings for the Northeastern States."

This method of cooperation has since been extended to the Western and the Southern States so that all of the states now have working drawings and plan books available because the Midwest Plan Service had previously provided for the needs of its member states. There are approximately 490 designs in the four plan services. This is a big reduction from the large number formerly carried by a relatively few states.

The extension of the cooperative plan service means that all of the states now have an effective and economical medium for conveying to farmers

1/ Farm Structures Research Division, Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering, U. S. D. A. Presented before the North Atlantic Section of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers at Orono, Maine, August 28, 1940.

ideas on approved building methods and advances in the functional uses of farm buildings. One difficulty is that due to economic and other reasons some of the institutions do not have a building specialist and are therefore not able to realize the fullest benefits obtainable from the plan service. A major step toward the revision of plans would be a movement to strengthen the personnel dealing with structures, at all of the State Colleges, and to encourage the employment of at least one full time building specialist by each of the states.

The objective of this paper is to point out errors in the present plans used by the Northeastern States and to suggest corrections which might be considered if a revision of Miscellaneous Publication 278 is made.

To avoid tedious detail, a copy of the plan book is submitted in which are noted suggestions that might be considered by the revising committee. A classified list of all exchange drawings (from which additions to your regional plan service might be selected) and certain working drawings which have been revised or developed from drawings in your regional plan services (which might supersede those now in use) are attached. Unfortunately the call for this discussion came too late for a comprehensive review of the plans to permit noting on them, in detail, all errors and omissions. This might be done by the subcommittee you select for this phase of the revision.

Before deciding upon a revision of the plan book, consider whether a revision of the present book is needed or whether plans representing a wider range of structures are desirable. If merely the latter, possibly an arrangement could be made for reproducing existing exchange drawings of other regions in the form of multiliths. These could be put in the pocket on the back cover. While such an expedient is being tried out, the committee would have time to make a thorough canvas of representatives

from the Colleges and check on desirable drawings. Also, results of the survey proposed by Mr. Ashby should be available for guidance. Apropos of this it is suggested that a check list of points to note in the survey be compiled to assure uniformity in comparing the various structures by the committee.

A few suggestions that might be helpful to the committee when considering plans for inclusion in the plan service are offered.

Plans intended to fit a particular purpose, site or condition are of little general use; frequently such designs can be changed to meet more general conditions.

Do not increase the number of plans in use in the plan service; if a plan is not actually needed for regional service, or to extend a well-founded new principle, use it locally.

Consider plans of other regions and supplemental plans of member states before introducing new ones; possibly revisions your committee might desire would make a plan more useful to the state where it originated. Collaborate with the designer--he might have suggestions which he did not incorporate due to lack of time.

Do not clamor for new construction materials. They may not be available locally; moreover, in most instances the farmer prefers to use material that he knows and has the skill to place.

Do not select a plan that is the pet of an individual or that incorporates a hobby of an influential specialist.

Plans should be reviewed by several persons to make certain of their functional and structural integrity. Some of the states have tabulated space requirements and these should be considered when reviewing drawings.

Do not load drawings with too many electric outlets, cramped corners for tricky gadgets, fancy cabinets and built-in equipment; these features frequently run the first cost estimate so high that the farmer looks elsewhere for a plan.

Encourage material manufacturers to use drawings for buildings from the plan service when adapting their products to rural structures.

There is a tendency to produce too many farmhouse plans -- there are 30 in the plan service. While these were the best plans available when the catalogs were prepared, many of these plans are not as carefully thought out for rural living and comfort as we desire. Some are of urban or sub-urban types in layout and architecture; some are deficient in detail. Detail sheets or mimeographed briefs, for use with the more popular plans, and showing methods of building different types of walls, might be more useful than additional designs. In preparing this material, many of the Minimum Requirements of the Federal Housing Administration might well be observed.

All plans for milk houses, and other structures where milk is handled, should be checked against the Milk Ordinance and Code of the U. S. Public Health Service, and contain a note that the local milk control officials should be consulted regarding sanitary regulations.

When making tracings, follow the standard instructions for preparation of exchange plans and use perspectives to show complicated details or special features to be stressed. As there is a charge for the drawings, they should contain full information.

Bills of materials have been prepared for a number of the drawings for Northeastern States and wherever feasible these should be lettered on the tracings.

for Northeastern States

The Plan Book/is illustrated differently from those of the other three regions in that miniatures of the working drawings are used in most instances instead of perspectives and block plans. This is a decided advantage to a county agent as he can refer to the complete plan in the book when talking to prospective builders and does not have to wait until a plan is received from the office. It will be of interest that this publication is used by architects and draftsmen as a guide in preparing plans in their professions. Unfortunately, the reproductions were intended for a small size page and work had progressed too far to permit changes when the present page size was selected. The reproductions would be clearer if made one-half inch larger in each dimension.

A page or two on planning for local conditions, similar to those in Miscellaneous Publication 360, "Plans of Farm Buildings for Southern States," would add to the value of the publication; also, if feasible, a short dissertation on costs might be desirable.

A parting suggestion is that the representatives of each state in the region actually point out omissions and errors, suggest improvements, and collaborate with specialists at the institution when tentative drawings are submitted. This should be done promptly and without fear of stepping on toes.

